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Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/153 of 19 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the strengthening of United Nations action in the field of human rights, through the promotion of international cooperation based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity, taking into account the views of Member States. Moreover, the Assembly decided to continue consideration of the question at its fifty-seventh session under the item entitled "Human rights questions".

2. In compliance with paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Secretary-General, in a note verbale dated 2 May 2002, invited Member States to present practical proposals and ideas that would contribute to the strengthening of United Nations action in the field of human rights, through the promotion of international cooperation based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity.

3. As of 5 August 2002, the following reply has been received from the Government of Cuba.

II. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[Geneva, 4 June 2002]

4. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers that international cooperation in the field of human rights cannot be effectively achieved without respect for the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.

5. According to the Government of the Republic of Cuba, United Nations action in this field should pursue the basic objective of developing and stimulating respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

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** The present document is submitted late so as to include the most up-to-date information possible.



through international cooperation. Crucial to this are a thorough understanding of the wide diversity of problems that arise in all societies and of the heterogeneous nature of the historical and cultural characteristics of each nation, together with full and total respect for the political, economic and social realities of each one of them, in strict conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. However, Cuba is greatly concerned about the prevailing situation of the work of the bodies and mechanisms of United Nations machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights, which is moving ever further away from the ideal of international cooperation in this field and is trapped in an absurd spiral of confrontation imposed upon it by the developed countries. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers that "a handful of rich and powerful nations of the North are exercising political manipulation of the Commission on Human Rights and other intergovernmental human rights bodies in an attempt to impose their views and their interests on other countries in the process of development", in short, on the vast majority of mankind. They increasingly attempt to establish a single yardstick of democracy and governance, claiming to apply it to all nations, without taking into consideration their historical, cultural and religious characteristics. In their opinion, "those who do not conform to this model, which has certainly not shown any capability to promote the realization of all human rights for all, have condemnatory resolutions and punitive mechanisms brought to bear on them, even when this means resorting to the basest forms of pressure and blackmail".

7. Cuba argues that "for more than 12 years in succession, all the resolutions on situations of massive and flagrant human rights violations in countries, adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, have related to countries of the South" and have been submitted, in the vast majority of cases, by countries of the North, whether former colonial Powers or new imperialist Powers, which continue their efforts to perpetuate and preserve their domination over their traditional spheres of influence through new mechanisms or to impose new areas of domination. It further states that, "in more than 50 years of existence, the Commission on Human Rights has still not been

able to adopt a resolution condemning human rights violations in industrialized Western countries. Nevertheless, the results of the visits by thematic rapporteurs to some of those countries, the conclusions and recommendations of the treaty bodies and the reports of non-governmental human rights organizations have provided ample evidence which, in a framework of objective and non-discriminatory cooperation, would demand the adoption of resolutions on those situations and the establishment of special procedures for permanent monitoring by the Commission. This applies especially to the situation of human rights violations prevailing in the United States of America."

8. The country that puts itself forward as the champion of democracy had to resort to blackmail, piousness and the complicity of the other industrialized countries to get itself elected as a member of the Commission on Human Rights, resorting to formulas that enabled it to avoid the democratic mechanism of election for fear that its aspirations might be defeated once again as a result of the rejection that its aggressive and confrontational actions in international politics have deserved.

9. The Government of Cuba considers that "the lack of any specific condemnation, prevented through pressure, of the violations of the rights of minorities, migrant workers, indigenous peoples and underprivileged sectors of the countries of the industrialized North permits and in practice clears the way for those responsible for such violations to go unpunished". It further considers that the existence of political institutions of a markedly racist and xenophobic character and of such abnormal practices as the use of the Internet to disseminate ideas of this kind, or prostitution and child pornography, are just some of the manifestations of the serious human rights violations that occur every day in those countries.

10. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers that the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights do not have a fair and balanced geographical composition that would enable them to understand the wide variety of cultures, religions and legal, political and philosophical systems.

11. The Government of Cuba states that "economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development continue to be diverted from the centre of attention of

the international community and, in particular, from the mobilization of resources by the countries of the North for their implementation; they continue to constitute the invisible part of human rights programmes as a result of the imposition of the hegemonic priorities and interests of a few developed nations".

12. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers that punitive approaches to developing countries are still favoured and resources for activities to promote human rights continue to dwindle, in particular for activities relating to technical cooperation, human rights education and education in general.

13. Efforts are being made to replace cooperation and dialogue with the imposition of "humanitarian intervention" with the use of armed force, an approach applied selectively in cases in which the economic, political or military considerations of the major Powers make it expedient.

14. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers it an obligation to denounce these situations, with the aim of helping to make all Member States and the community of non-governmental organizations aware of the need to replace the prevalent confrontation with genuine dialogue-based cooperation, as endorsed by the Charter of the United Nations.

15. The universality of all human rights will only become reality when the differences and the special features of every human being and every people are respected. All attempts at imposition and domination weaken and discredit the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

16. The Government of the Republic of Cuba confirms its desire to work towards the pressing goal of making the letter and spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action a reality. The promotion, protection and full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms can only be attained if there is full respect for the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.